

THORNE CUP WRAP-UP; April 13, 2018



Photo provided by: Mark Mauno

The Ogden Mustangs, Idaho IceCats, El Paso Rhinos and Long Beach Bombers have qualified for the semifinals of the 2018 Thorne Cup following the thrilling conclusion of the round-robin stage of the tournament on Friday night. The Oklahoma City Blazers and Utah Outliers were eliminated in a tie-breaker after four teams finished deadlocked for the final two semifinal spots.

Idaho 5, Long Beach 1

The Long Beach Bombers scored 39 seconds into their game against Idaho, and still led 1-0 at the first intermission, but it was all IceCats after that. Idaho scored twice in the second period to take a 2-1 lead, then added three more in the third period for a 5-1 final that ensured Idaho a spot in the top four.

Long Beach had to sit back and scoreboard watch, but also advanced after claiming the fourth and final semifinal spot.

Marcus Jernberg scored twice for the IceCats and goaltender Tyler Matthews shook off some rust - and an early goal against - to backstop the rally with 14 saves.

While Long Beach goaltender Spencer Kozlowski (24 saves) was making his third start of the Thorne Cup, Matthews was making his first appearance in the Idaho crease since February 18.

Ryan Gil scored in the first minute of play for the Bombers.

Ogden 5, Oklahoma City 3

Ivan Bondarenko's goal 25 seconds into the second period gave the Oklahoma City Blazers a 2-1 lead over the Ogden Mustangs, but Ogden responded with four unanswered goals on their way to a 5-3 win.

Ogden finished as the top team in the round-robin and was the only team to win all of their games in the first stage of the tournament.

Jacob Laurin scored a hat trick for Ogden with Matus Spodniak assisting on all three goals.

Bobby Cloutier made 36 saves for Oklahoma City and stopped all 14 shots in the third period to give the Blazers a chance to mount a comeback, but a stingy Ogden defense shut OKC down and held them to five shots on goal in the final period.

Tymen Edelkoort, making his third start in as many days, stopped 18 of 20 shots through two periods before being lifted with the Mustangs ahead, 5-2. Jonathan Chin played the third period, allowing one goal on five shots.

Oklahoma City's Connor Dunn scored the lone goal of the third period.

El Paso 4, Utah 3

The El Paso Rhinos were on the brink of elimination after losing their first two games at the 2018 Thorne Cup, but the scores of the earlier games on Friday broke in their favor, and they defeated the Utah Outliers 4-3 in the final game of the round-robin. That created a four-way tie for the final two spots - one of which went to the Rhinos.

With their backs to the wall, the Rhinos trailed 1-0 and 2-1, but got the next goal to tie both times and two goals in the final three minutes of the second period gave them a 4-2 lead.

Goals by Dylan Massie and Kane Toriumi had Utah out in front, but Leeam Tivers and Chaseton Sare tied it back up for El Paso. Sare's goal came on the power play with 2:01 left in the first period.

Colby Haugen made a nice play to keep the puck in at the blue line, then fed it to Sare, who moved across the top of the circles with his head up, looking for an opening, then rifled a wrist shot past past Utah's Dawson Rodin to tie the game, 2-2.

Two of the Rhinos top scorers all season, Austin Simpson and Jakob Kranabetter, came through with second period goals to put El Paso up, 4-2.

Playing four-on-four, a Utah pass through the neutral zone hit a skate and deflected to Nikita Pintusov who skated hard down the right wing and fed a pass to Simpson in the slot who buried a wrist shot.

Kranabetter twisted the knife with a goal that came with eight seconds left in the period. The veteran center won a faceoff in the Utah end and the puck went to line mate Philip Pugliese who fired the puck on net. The puck went just wide of the net on the short side but Kranabetter, who went hard to the net after winning the faceoff, collected the puck and executed a quick wraparound to give the Rhinos a two-goal lead and take the wind out of the Outliers' sails as they headed to the locker room.

A goal by Utah's Roman Svik with 7:38 left in the game forced the Rhinos and goaltender Kayden Pickles to play out the remaining time on the clock clinging to a one-goal lead.

El Paso head coach Cory Herman went with his backup goaltender Pickles between the pipes for the must-win game and was rewarded with a 24-save effort. Rodin made 26 saves for the Outliers.

2018 THORNE CUP

PRELIMINARY ROUND STANDINGS - FINAL

TEAM, W-L-OTL; PTS (GF/GA)

Ogden, 3-0-0; 6 points (13/7)

Idaho, 2-1-0; 4 points (10/7)

El Paso, 1-2-0; 2 points (8/11)

Long Beach, 1-2-0; 2 points (7/10)

Oklahoma City, 1-2-0; 2 points (9/12)

Utah, 1-2-0; 2 points (9/9)

SEMIFINAL SCHEDULE

2:00 p.m. Ogden (3-0-0) vs. Long Beach (1-2-0)

7:00 p.m. Idaho (2-1-0) vs. El Paso (1-2-0)

All games at Sierra Providence Events Center, El Paso TX

--- Scott Harrington/Harrington Sports Media